Blood and Light

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Blood and Light

by feveredsweetness

Summary

Jack's features scrunched up, his eyes darkening in what Will knew to be disgust mixed with frustration. "Human cloning is illegal, Will."
"So is murder, yet here we are."

Will Graham enters a whole new realm of madness.

Notes

Hi! This started out as a random free-write. I simply wanted to see what would happen if Hannibal and Orphan Black intersected, along with what would happen if you put Helena and Will in a room together. I will try to update regularly. Enjoy!

Chapter 1

Will exhaled slowly, and closed his eyes; the reflective light of the pendulum shining behind his eyelids as it rhythmically swept back and forth. He didn't want to be here. He was supposed to be back in Wolf Trap, assembling the new motor for his boat so that he could finally leave for his fishing trip in Florida. But, of course, Jack had asked to borrow Will's imagination once more. Only it was never an inquiry with Jack; it was always an insistent knock that threatened to break down the door if ignored.

Will's jaw clenched as he shook himself out of his routine; the air around him stifling as the blood on the walls demanded to be heard in their story. He removed his glasses and pinched the bridge of his nose, tiny droplets of sweat greeting his fingers. A hiss escaped his mouth, as he took his hand away and shakily fetched the bottle of aspirin from the front jacket pocket. He popped two of the red pills into his mouth and swallowed hard, the bitter chalky aftertaste lingering on his tongue. The thinking was shutting down as he had so frequently been telling Jack, but he had to try. Now that Will was here, he had to at least try. A chill ran through him as he nodded to himself in affirmation, sliding his glasses into an interior pocket of his olive green jacket.

His eyes scanned the room, taking in the blood and scattered remnants of chaos that littered the tiled floor. With another deep, more stabilized breath, Will shut his eyes and proceeded to start his process over.

Fwum. Fwum.

The reflective light hit the back of his lids again. His feet carried him backwards in time; blood drops defying gravity, shards of glass picking themselves up, returning to the mirrors and kitchenware they belonged to. The body before him regained shades of life and was back at the head of the table, sipping a glass of Merlot.

Surrounding members of the forensics unit disappeared; their dull voices going from a monotonous hum to a completely deadened silence. His teeth were set on edge as he fully gave himself over to his imagination, and to the mind of the killer he currently sought to understand. Another exhale; slower as the tension in his muscles momentarily drained. He could feel the killer in him, the mirrors in his mind catching their reflection in fleeting blurs of colored movement. His lips tugged upwards into an icy yet uncertain smile. It felt foreign as it graced his features.

You feel uncomfortable in where you are, don't you? Will asked. His eyebrows knitted together as his head tilted slowly to one side before he opened his eyes, quickly devouring the details of the scene before him.

He took cautious yet predatory steps towards the dinner table, his fingers wrapping around the carved handle of the blade he now carried. They were wrapped with the steeled intent on carrying out the assignment at hand.

The woman at the head of the kitchen table swilled the wine in her glass, examining the legs the drink left in its settled wake. Pleased, she raised the glass to her lips and took another satisfied sip of the Merlot.

The killer watched curiously, their free hand fumbling with the zipper on an upper pant pocket. Another step, as the hood of their jacket continued to shadow in their face.

“I observe and stalk you, curious as to how you exist; curious as to how you and I came to be in this room together. You are my reflection, yet a separate and fabricated image all the same. You are a false image of God. An image to be destroyed in the name of my salvation. For I am the original. I am the light.” Will’s voice carried out the words in a fragmented syntax, similar to that of a scorned and angry child’s. Only this killer was no child. They were fully grown, sheltered yet educated in the way of how to conduct themselves within society. Withdrawn from society and yet forced to participate in the name of their holy mission. Detached but focused; raised for a single purpose. Not for connection, or understanding, but for salvation. Salvation attained through a great and terrible purge.

“You spot me from a periphery angle. Our gazes latch before you tear yours away in order to flee, only to be surprised when I catch you. God’s abomination. I grab the nearest chair, striking you down with brute force before I pin you down, and let the blade catch the skin of your throat. I look at you; see inside you, though I do not find myself. I do not find the light, for the light is in me. I am the light.” Will’s breath blows against the woman’s face, lifting strands of brown hair away as her eyes widen in fear; panicked breaths escaping her mouth in quick succession. His head tilted at an odd angle as wonderment and rage contorted his body, seeped into his words. He played with a wisp of the suburban woman’s hair; exertion and struggle had messed up his victim’s pristine, collected appearance: cardigan rumpled, cheeks flushed yet lips drained of color due to hyperventilation. Will’s mouth curled in disgust.

“Who are you? Not Beth. Not the dirty little copy cop. Another sacrilegious copy. Another black sheep in His flock.” The woman underneath him did not answer as too much weight was upon her, making it a struggle to breathe, let alone think as the hand crafted blade dug deeper into her neck, a bead of blood resting on the blade, threatening to slide off and drip down onto his hand.

Disgust transformed itself into a lopsided smile that slid across Will’s lips as he removed the blade from the woman’s throat only to bring it back down again in a graceful, skilled slash. “This is your bloodletting. This is my sacrifice. This is my claiming of light. This…is my design.”
His eyes closed in euphoric satisfaction, mouth agape as a few red pinpricks hit the ends of his jacket’s sleeves. The woman gurgled momentarily before going quiet. Will shifted his weight, removing the pressure from her body, as he sat back against the legs of the table, his eyes scrutinizing the glass shards from the mirror that had been smashed in the process of taking down his victim.

His blood chilled as he studied the corpse in front of him, detached yet not entirely. A shaky breath left his lungs. He focused on steadying his breaths and removed himself from the played out scenario. After a few still moments, Will found himself back in the present as careful footsteps and frustrated comments from colleagues flooded into his ears. His eyes

opened and found Jack, who was waiting for him with thinning patience; the members of the forensics unit behind him continuing their search for traces of the killer's identity.

"So?" Jack prodded.

Will smirked, annoyed but amused by the short half-life Jack's patience had. Will retrieved his glasses from where he had concealed them earlier, and slid them up the bridge of his nose.

"This killer," Will informed him; his words still caught in the killer's linguistic pattern, "is bothered by what she does, though she is considerably detached from her victims as she eliminates them in His good name."

Confusion struck Jack's features before clarity did. He nodded, eyes directed at the floor. "Salvation mission."

"Yes. Only…" Will trailed off, his tongue moving behind his teeth. He looked up at Jack, making eye contact for a split second before shying away again. He found a sudden interest in a bloodied glass shard. "She didn't set herself on this mission. The killing, it's her design, but she's a pawn. Someone else is motivating her to commit these murders. Someone who sees her as sinful in both nature and image yet presents her as a blessing."

"How do we know the killer's a woman?"

Will blinked and sighed before responding. He glanced from the woman on the floor, then back up at Jack. "Reflections, Jack. These women are reflections. More than that, even. Identicals."

Jack's features scrunched up, his eyes darkening in what Will knew to be disgust mixed with frustration. "Human cloning is illegal, Will."

"So is murder, yet here we are."

Jack responded with a reproachful hum. The steeled steadiness of his gaze would have been enough to unnerve any other FBI team member, but Will was never one to flinch under Jack's expressions of anger or disappointment. Compared to the reflected horrors trapped within his mind's eye, and the blood staunched screams that bit his nerves in greeting at each and every crime scene, Jack Crawford was more or less an agitated house cat.

Will smirked, mildly and momentarily amused by the mental image his imagination whipped up at the comparison. His attention then abruptly shifted over to Jimmy Price, who seemed to be in mid debate with Brian Zeller over something. He noted the knife in Price's gloved hands which were trying to refrain from being overly animated and waving the knife around.

"I'm telling you, this killer does not work alone." Price adamantly told Zeller.

Zeller scoffed. "And I'm telling you that there are no other identifiable prints on the blade's handle, nor are there any separate set of prints anywhere else. Not to mention, no fibers, hair strands. Nothing, buddy."

Price huffed, rolling his eyes. Will got up from his spot against the table and walked over to where Price and Zeller stood.

“That doesn’t necessarily mean that the killer is a lone wolf.” Will added; much to Price’s appreciation and Zeller’s annoyance. “The killer is definitely motivated and engaged by another. A Shepherd.”

“Let me see that?” He asked Price, before Zeller could work an objection in, nodding towards the hand-crafted weapon in his hands. Zeller wordlessly handed him a pair of gloves which Will absentmindedly put on.

Carefully taking the knife from Jimmy, his eyes scrutinized every carved detail; his fingers running over the curves and edges, memorizing the image and form of the blade’s handle.

“Flying fish,” Will muttered, eyebrows scrunching together as his eyes narrowed.

“You’re familiar with its meaning?” Jack inquired, his voice jolting awareness into Price and Zeller, who hadn’t noticed his presence until then. He was practically on top of them.

Will nodded, licking his bottom lip as his eyes darted away from the handle, and fixated on something in the distance as his mind flooded him with information. “Price is right, Zeller. She kills on her own, but doesn’t work alone. The fish is a Christian symbol. The fact that this symbol is the blade’s handle…” His voice faded out again as his thoughts clicked into place, eyes swimming in comprehension. “Her Shepherd has her following a righteous path, but not for her salvation. She’s only been bred to believe that. They’ll kill her soon enough.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Tomas wants another sheep. Helena's time is limited.

Helena stood in the bathroom of Tomas's basement. She gazed into the mirror above the sink, her white tank top having been peeled from off her back and thrown into the bathtub, next to empty peroxide bottles, used up gauze, and dulled razor blades.

"You are the light," she whispered firmly to her reflection. Her true reflection. Eyes hollowed by exhaustive red circles, the paleness of surrounding skin a stark and startling contrast; as if to allude to the innocence she had long been bereft of.

A low hiss escaped her mouth; her weathered lips flattening before settling into a small scowl. Her fists clenched the sides of the sink, her head pressed against the water stained speckled mirror. She rocked forward onto her toes. "I am the light. I am the light." The pressure went to her heels as she slowly eased back, trying to suppress a shudder.

"But you are trapped within the shadows," Tomas said from behind. Helena jumped, nerves biting into her thoughts.

You're slipping, kiddo.

She shook her head, blinking a few times, and turned around to face her Shepherd. Tomas's eyes studied her, slowly shifting their gaze from her exposed hip to the resting contours of her face.

"Helena. I've told you. You have to finish the purge."

Helena's teeth dug into her bottom lip, cracking the skin and producing a droplet of blood. Her tongue flicked over to remove it, as she responded to Tomas with a sharp nod. "Yes, Tomas."

Tomas's disgust was veiled in kindness and endearment as he stepped forward, his shoes giving off small echoes that, to Helena, sounded like measured ticks of a clock that would soon stop running. Her back pressed against the edge of the sink, cooling her skin. Her eyes darted in thought as she shifted her weight more onto another foot.

Tomas was nearly on top of her now, a rough hand framing the side of her face, fingers lightly tangled in unruly blonde curls. Helena nuzzled into his touch, eyes nearly closed as an unnerved breath rushed into his palm.

“You owe me another sheep, Helena. You promised me another sheep. Your work is not done.”

Helena nodded into his hand, breathing a reply. “I know of another sheep. But I must wait. FBI is snooping.”

A growl rumbled as Tomas’s touch grew threatening as his fingers snared harshly into her skin, digging deeper into her cheek and jaw, bringing her head to an uncomfortable, pinching angle. Helena’s eyes narrowed and scrunched together. She wanted to break his wrist, but knew better than to try.

He will save you.

Tomas’s gaze resembled that of a shark’s: cold, hungry, and angry at being denied the chummed waters.

“Don’t end up like Maggie.” The venom made her pulse stutter.

Helena grunted a response, meeting his eyes, fingers grasping at the ledge of the sink.

“Clean up.” He brusquely ordered, releasing the woman from his grip. The small of Helena’s back rammed further into the sink’s edge due to Tomas’s forceful shove upon letting go. Tomas turned to walk away, turned back, and regarded the original with cruel intent. “After,” he spoke quietly yet firmly, a snarled smirk broaching his lips. “You repent.” He turned away again, and strode out of the room, closing the bathroom door with a definitive thud.

Helena was left standing there, lower back still hurting; the forming of a bruise mapping its way across pale skin. She shut her eyes, a rattling breath tickling her lips. Her hand reached for the razor blade behind her; her fingers gently running over the cool, smooth surface. The metal felt pristine despite the blood it had let from her in prior times of use.

Her lips twitched up into a small, almost secret smile. That was the point, wasn’t it? The blood-letting; the cleansing of the terrible toxins within her; the unseemly, unsavory sins pumping their way through her internal system…there would always be something inside of her that Tomas saw fit for expulsion.

Helena’s slender, long fingers danced around the razor’s edge before allowing the blade to rest between her thumb and middle finger. A pained yet pleasured groan ghosted past her weathered mouth, as her eyes hooded, back arching. A bead of blood trailed down into the lower etches of the angel wings she had long ago etched into her skin. The initial carvings had brought mostly tears and sheer pain; she remembered laying on her side on the cot in Tomas’s basement afterwards, outside of the bloodied bathroom, shirtless, her entire back on fire. Tomas had chided her; forced her and persuaded her that this was all about cleansing and finding the light. He said it was the beginning of her road to being saved. Now, she believed him.

“I am the light.”

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

> Life happened, so apologies for having disappeared for a few months. Some minor edits have been made to the first two chapters (certain details have been altered a bit). I will try and get the fourth chapter up sooner, as long as life doesn't suck me into a void. Anyway, enjoy, and feel free to say "hi," leave kudos, and/or feedback! Thanks for reading. :)

“This woman you’ve been trying to get to know,” Hannibal said carefully, taking a measured beat to observe Will’s fingers drumming restlessly on his desk, before proceeding. “Is looking for salvation in places she won’t find it. Much like yourself.”

A phantom of a sneer disrupted the concentrated line of Will’s lips, before shifting into a quick smirk interceded by a nervous, brittle chuckle. “You still think it isn’t physiological.” A hand wiped across his face, staying as a shield above his eyes.

“Mental illness is isolating. You’re already feeling isolated. As is she. Fear finds nourishment in that, and you are trying to force it into starvation.”

“Yes, well unfortunately, I am a feast for fear. Still…I need to get more tests, though Doctor Sutcliffe appears to share the heftiness of your doubt.” Will’s hand swept away, and nudged his glasses back up his nose, as he bit the inside of his mouth. “Indulge me, for comfort’s sake.”

Hannibal stood in front of his desk, peering down at the man slouched back in his leather office chair. A soft, polite smile was offered. “I only am trying to lead you to the truth, Will; however, you steer yourself.”

With a grated sigh, Will returned his focus to the case at hand. A panel of photos of the suburban victim lay on Hannibal’s desk; the blood and breathless face of the woman made staunch imprints in Will’s mind as he felt his own throat and lungs constrict momentarily. “A reflection; shattered and rejected. Dissonant. False.”

“Your killer does not accept the possibility of likeness, though she searches for it in other ways. Through other people who have not been called sinful, though sinful are we all. Her rejection of the reflection is perceived as false because it is a copy, and therefore, not Godlike.” Hannibal took the photo nearest the edge of the desk, his eyes glimmering in fixation on some minute yet crucial detail that Will had undoubtedly spotted much earlier. He kept it to himself, intrigued as to where the profiler would eventually take it.

“My killer looks to the ones who bred her. They send her out to find members of a deceitful flock. A black sheep portrayed as the white. Her Shepherd waits for each kill, each purge. Only then can she purge herself. Her Shepherd, the others, use her for their own means before subjecting her to slaughter. Or maybe…” Graham trailed off, considering an alternate before brushing it away in distaste. “No. As much as they may prefer otherwise, they need her. And they need her to believe that she is pure. That she is the Light. Their godsend in a world of sin.”

Hannibal stroked his thumb over the found detail before surrendering the photo back to Will, whose hand was outstretched in a determined yet reluctant way.

Will’s lips twitched up as he took the photo back and scrutinized it once more, grumpily shifting his glasses to where they should rest on the bridge of his nose.

“The fish blade was confiscated?”

“Evidence has it,” Will muttered, transported back into the crime scene. Lecter’s eyes shifted curiously.

“She’ll want it back, I’m sure.”

“She rejects likeness,” Will breathed, backtracking whilst simultaneously ignoring Hannibal’s last utterance. Bemusement took hold of Lecter’s face before being replaced by subtle admiration in a tick of an instant. He began to pace over to the drink cabinet, listening to Will’s epiphany.

“Yet, here she saw likeness. That’s why she smashed the mirror. She’s onto her Shepherd’s lies and misconduct, while struggling to accept. So, she rejects. Still too gripped by firm beliefs and an unstable yet powerful religious foundation, but her own mental instability doesn’t allow her to see her foundation as unstable. Dr. Lecter,” Will prompted, fixing his gaze upon the psychiatrist. “She could go rogue.”

“And look for answers?” Hannibal walked back to his own desk and set a glass of whiskey in front of Will, before taking a sip of his own drink at hand. “But are you both scrambling for answers in the wrong, dark corners?”

A sharp look shot from Will, as Hannibal took another sip, unfazed. “You both may continue to look, but I will keep your best interest in mind, Will. You’re my friend, and you will have to confront the possibility sooner rather than later. She, however…”

Will acknowledged the words being said, aware that Hannibal was possibly correct about him and his recent mental glitches, though something in his gut took stubborn root. He said nothing in response to the matter. The truth of his mental condition could wait. He felt stable enough.

He downed his whiskey and got up from the office chair, gathering up the photos prior to snatching the file that lay by their side.

“I know where my killer will be looking for her next answer.” Grabbing his jacket, he paused by the door, facing Hannibal again. “Thank you, Dr. Lecter.”

Hannibal nodded, his mouth stretching into a slight smile. “Goodnight, Will.”

He returned to his desk, retrieved his iPad from the top drawer, and reclined, thoughtfully, back into his chair. Flipping the front part of the case back, it took only a few moments for the screen to greet him in a glow, and a few more before he found what he wanted.

“Hello, Ms. Manning.”

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

> I know Pupok doesn't appear until season 3, but indulge me. Hope you enjoy, and feel free to say hi and share! <3

Helena walked undetected amongst the swarming crowd, each step she took feeling borrowed, as the fresh additions to her wings protested against her clothes. To a degree, she relished it. The harsh bites which lead into dull, softened throbs of pain that were as kind as they were cruel. Much like Tomas, Helena thought, and her mouth curled into a smile that would not reveal the deeper truth behind it.

She was supposed to be out stalking sheep, but after a dismal morning full of misleads as to where her desired sheep was, she had chosen to grab hot dogs from the stand managed by a man with dull eyes, hair that had long since gone limp and sparse, and a mouth that could not withstand the seasons of human nature. She contemplated how many actually could. The temperament alone…her teeth gnashed into her right cheek, dislodging her from a runaway train of thought.

God will take him soon. Her inner child waved at him before turning away, cheeks full of hotdog and bread. The man blinked at her in distant confusion, eyes glazed, before returning to his work and the growing line of bumbling, mechanical customers.

Her boots collided with the pavement in misguided determination and simmering stubbornness. The scuffs on each offered hints of previous tracking missions, with the soles, no doubt, having seen their share of blood, sludge, and gasoline. She carried on in her trademark slouch, her eyes searching, learning; barren of any enlightenment.

Helena's heart felt adrift.

Tomas is going to call soon, y'know. And then what? You need to find that sheep and kill her.

"Shut up, Pupok," she growled under her breath and in between ravenous bites. The corners of her mouth carried debris consisting of ketchup and cheap buns. Her tongue sought them out, then savored the flavors as her eyes fluttered to a close. She was resting in a side alley, where only a homeless man resided; napping in his makeshift bed, snoring on and off. A snarl formed itself upon her features as Helena shot him an annoyed glance, while finishing off the second of three dogs.

"Maybe I get Jell-O after." She mumbled, ignoring her visitor's protestations.

You don't want to end up in the cage again, do you? You have to hand over a sheep.

Helena shook her head, wild blonde curls catching on her jacket. “But she’s different, Pupok. She sees me. She’s—she’s me.”

Pupok carried himself up her knee, and perched at the top of it, sounding off disapproving clicks. His stinger was up and poised, though she knew he would not strike. She knew that Pupok feared the chances of him being eaten again, and she admitted to herself that those chances were more in her favor than in his.

Only you are the light. You know that. The rest are false.

“N-no.” Helena took a chunk out of the remainders of her lunch. “She has light. She is not a doll. God…God has shown me.”

Pupok gave another series of clicks intermingled with judgmental hisses before Helena’s burner went off; the shrill rings echoing off her brick surroundings before they were muted with the hasty hit of the decline button.

“He will wait. We have a connection. Me and Not Beth.”

Pupok swiveled around on Helena’s knee, about to embark the path down her leg, when Helena snatched him up by the stinger, and dangled him over an open palm. Amusement flickered in her gaze, her smile brimming with iced charm; the last bit of her meal having been discarded by her feet. Pupok seethed, trying to regain his power via the threat of his pincers, trying to free his tail.

“You will help, yes?” Helena cooed.

Pupok went limp in her hand, his allegiance signaled by the halt of his aggression.

You’re an idiot.

Helena gently tossed him aside, laughing bitterly as teeth set against chapped and worried lips. She brought herself up from the ground, taking the previously discarded and mostly eaten hot dog with her. She crammed the rest of it into her mouth, chewing slowly in contemplation, as her chafed hands brushed away any crumbs off her jacket.

So, what’s the plan?

“We go to where snooping pigs lie.”

Pupok clicked curiously and trailed back over from the dumpster he had landed by.

“They have something that belongs to me. The knife.”

It’s the Bureau. You can’t just walk in.

Helena shook her head. “Not the Bureau. Police station.”

Pupok’s tail twitched and curled more.

That's cold ground.

Helena snorted and looked at her friend in further amusement; the circles underneath her eyes redder, hungrier; for sleep and for truth.

"They will come to me. You will see. The knife will come to me."

Maggie would—

"Maggie is not here!" Helena snarled, fury consuming her voice and body; wild blonde hair blowing against the hood of her jacket which had been emitting the odor of low-tide for months. Puffs of anguished breath hit the air in quick succession. Helena's eyes scrunched shut as her hands quivered and curled into tight, threatening fists.
It was all because of her. Her hesitance to shoot Beth Childs cost her only friend her life. Maggie had believed in Helena, and Helena had failed her. Her doubt was paid for in blood, and a trail going cold.

Her scorpion companion remained mute for a few moments.

You are hungry, still. Pupok reasoned, his stinger twitching once in response to the surge in tension between him and the angel.

Don't waste away.

"Tomas will get his sheep, Maggie." A tear caressed her cheek.

Use your wings, Helena. Have strength.

Helena nodded, and exhaled slowly, oxygen appearing within frigidness. Her breath somehow made the surrounding air colder, more aggressive. Soon, it bit through her clothes and into her skin, piercing even through her combat boots; relentless in nature, much like herself.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Will gets closer to finding Helena.

Helena revisits the past.

Chapter Notes

Struggled with this chapter a bit as Helena and Will unexpectedly changed routes. Love these two.

Flashback scene at the end of this chapter.

Enjoy the trip further down the rabbit hole! Send some love, if you wish. Thank you for reading! <3

Trills echoed in Will Graham's ears, shaking him from his coiled slumber. His chest heaved as it delivered rattled exhales, his fear causing his lungs to work overtime, delaying recovery. Sweat saturated his shirt, boxers, and sheets as beads of it trickled down his skin, making him itch uncomfortably.

"Shit." Gasping, he sat up, ran a hand through his soaked mop of hair, and answered his phone. "Hello?" His fingers fumbled with the lining of a blanket, the voice on the other end pulling him into focus.

"Detective Bell from TPD. We need you."

"Christ, Art. I thought you wanted me out?" Light flickered as he tapped the switch on the bedside lamp. The harsh light pierced his eyes, making them scrunch and water. He blinked as Art Bell of the Toronto Police Department spoke.

"We've had a visitor. Left a greeting collage and a call. They used a voice modifier but we know it's our killer."

Will's teeth indented his lower lip. He sucked in a breath and took a swig of water from the glass he had set earlier. He was, unfortunately, out of whiskey.

"Graham, you there?" Art's urgency prodded at him. Will placed the glass down, eyes skittering towards the clock. 6:30 AM.

“Yeah, I’m there. I’ll be there.” He cut the connection and carried himself to the bathroom. He needed a shower, and the taste of spearmint to cleanse the bitterness from an honest yet scorned tongue. He needed an ounce of normalcy in a cataclysm of madness, especially when his beloved strays were back in Wolf Trap, waiting, wriggling, and wagging; all in bursts of enthusiastic impatience. Alana Bloom would be curled up with them in front of his space heater right now; probably with a beer and Flannery O’Connor in hand.

Fondness smoothed his mouth into a smile. The recollection of Alana telling him of her attempt at raising peacocks washed over him, more soothing than the shower’s water massaging his skin.

He didn’t even remember brushing his teeth and stripping, before stepping into the motel’s worn but clean tub. They were thoughtless gestures which held no valued hue in comparison to the memory he presently bathed in.

Their moment together felt all the more distant than it actually was, only a month ago. Time for him, however, was lately warped. Will had been noting blanks where there should be records, and had only mentioned it to Hannibal in passing. The psychiatrist blamed it on stress, so stress was the excuse Will clung to. They both knew otherwise.

He shook his head, dispelling droplets and soap suds. He indulged in one last savoring of the stream before casting himself back out to where screams and violence flooded in all too quickly.

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Art ushered Will in to the police station, barely waiting for Will’s terse greeting as he launched him into the ongoing commotion in the board room.
Will’s eyes carefully scanned the collage of photos the killer had cruelly yet purposefully left behind for them to dissect.

“Thoughtful,” Graham muttered.

Art nearly spat out his coffee as angered distaste narrowed his eyes while forging his tone.

“Thoughtful?” He challenged.

Will Graham’s eyes looped around before shooting back at the detective. His teeth gritted against each other as he removed his glasses.

“Not in the Hallmark way,” he countered. “Thoughtful in the construction of the message and its meaning, however, easily overlooked by appalled officials.” His lips quivered in amusement, the temptation to mock the detective lightening his eyes.

“You wanna further elaborate, Graham?” Art snapped. “I don’t exactly have time to be dicking around here.”

Will scoffed. “Then you should have accepted my expertise sooner.”

Art stood in front of him, anger rippling through his muscles. He exhaled slowly, through his nose, while staring down the man before him.

“Do your job, and I’ll do mine.”

Will’s eyes flicked around the room, his body tensing as his shoe lightly scuffed the tiled floor.

“What?”

“I need them to leave.” The profiler demanded softly.

“They’re helping with the case.”

Graham nodded in understanding, and repeated himself while making fleeting eye contact with Bell.

“With what I do,” Will reasoned. “People aren’t always…fond of the manner in which I think. I don’t need them analyzing me.”

Art, with a scoff, acquiesced. The mumbling, shuffling forms of Art’s team filed out of the board room, leaving Will and Art in their required wake.

“Get to work, Graham.” Art strode over to the board room’s table, and slid the main case file into his palm. His interest in Graham was waning; annoyance and mild detestation were brimming to near surface, yet he maintained his professional poise.

Will bit the inside of his mouth, as he resisted the urge to crack his jaw; he placed his glasses back on as he stepped closer to the investigation board. Art glanced down at the now opened file in his hands.

“What did Jack Crawford have to say?”

Art neglected to look away from the contents he studied. “What?”

“Surely, he’s the one you ran to first.”

Art chuckled, and flipped a page. “He said you were the best, despite my doubts, given your unique way of thinking. Not the most sociable, but…” Art shrugged.

Will snorted, uninterested in whatever else came after Art’s deliberate trail off. He had the killer’s message to deliver. He scrutinized one of the images within the collage, before breaking down the message to Art.

The photo snatching the most of his attention was of blood-smeared glass shards, reflecting the sunlight that had beamed down upon its surface, amongst the surrounding gravel. It coincided with the shattered glass he studied at the initial crime scene of the suburban woman. Surrounding photos within the collage featured biblical excerpts, butchered limbs of another victim uncovered at an active quarry, and a toy doll’s mutilated head.

“‘Fearfully and wonderfully made…’” Will breathed; his tone a mix of awe and affliction.

Art looked up from the file, expectantly.

“The collage reflects our killer’s fragmented view of sins. It’s also a mockery.” Will explained. He began to pace about the board room while remaining in proximity to the killer’s displayed calling card.

“She wants to play. The construction of her message is deliberate, which is why I said it was thoughtful earlier. She tracks and hunts sin for a living. False images. Each woman she kills looks like her. To her, they’re dolls; completely devoid of the light God gives us, though she still sees parts of their nature that bare semblance to hers.”

“So, not only is she on a crusade—”

“Her purge in exchange for redemption is causing her to have doubts about her own identity.” Graham interjected. “She no longer finds her Shepherd to be enough, in terms of a guide. She is looking within herself for truth, for light. And there’s one person, other than herself, that she sees the light in most.”

“Sarah Manning.” The two men said together.

Panic suddenly passed across Art’s face.

“The knife.” The stab of realization propelled him into action. Graham followed him out of the room, and over to his desk where he was scanning the evidence logs on his computer.

“Shit,” Art said. His fist made contact with the wood of his desk in a bruise inducing slam. He turned around to confer with Graham, but was instead met with the profiler’s absence. Graham was already striding away, down the corridor.

Detective Bell smiled, half-bitter, to himself. His temporary partner had lifted the address of Manning’s last whereabouts. Of course. He knew the religious psycho would be there.

“I do not get paid enough,” he muttered as he hit the redial button on his mobile. “Crawford. It’s Bell. We have a situation.”

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“I can get you out of here,” Maggie whispered; the affection in her echoed words nuzzling Helena’s ear and warming her battered heart.

“Tomas will strike you,” Helena refuted. She was curled up into herself, her arms forming a brace that kept her legs securely pressed against her chest. The forlorn Ukranian’s side hurt, as she had been lying on the grimed up floor for far too long.

Punishment for weakness. Faulty behavior.

Maggie could hear her rattling breaths from above the sewer-like grate in which she peered down through.

“Tomas will yield if reasoned with. Let me get you out, Helena. Let me remind him how much he needs you, our light.”

Helena gave a sputtering chuckle. It was too cold, and her throat was as scratchy as sandpaper.

Get out, kiddo. No one said it was going to be easy.

The angry angel glared at Pupok, who skittered near her. Her stomach rumbled. Dirty water pitter pattered upon her skin. The rank smell of defecation and sulfur made her head grow light.

“I have failed.”

“But you will succeed, Helena. I have faith.”

A harsh screech against cement sounded as the grate was slid over. Helena heard the soft clambering echoes of Maggie’s descent. She remained in her defeated position, distrusting that she would be freed and not be tortured.

Maggie’s approach was measured in puddle-disrupting steps.

One.

Three.

Eight.

Twelve.

Silence.

Chen’s shadow blanketed over the paled and tired angel. Helena closed her eyes in something akin to relief.

Maggie crouched beside her friend, smoothing her untamed curls before sweeping them behind her ear.

“You need to eat.”

Helena blinked and found herself salivating at the sight of the turkey and Swiss sandwich in front of her. With a shaky hand, she snatched it, taking quick, savage bites.

Maggie smiled at her, endeared. “There we go.”

She caressed her cheek before lightly squeezing her shoulder.

“Finish up. Tomas will be waiting for me, then you. Training will resume tomorrow.”

“And if I fail again? Will he send me back to the place of screams?” Her voice hushed like a child’s.

“No. You will not fail us in the end. You are the light, Helena. I know it. I see it. I see it so clearly.”

Helena smiled, lips cracked, and eyes gleaming within the red of the bags beneath.

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